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THESIS

**THE EVOLUTION OF THE MEXICAN MILITARY: FROM
THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION IN 1910 TO 2014**

by

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March 2015

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**THE EVOLUTION OF THE MEXICAN MILITARY: FROM THE MEXICAN
REVOLUTION IN 1910 TO 2014**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis provides a longitudinal review of the Mexican military's relationship with the state. From 1910 to 2014, the events, rhetoric, and geopolitical representations of the Mexican Revolution are assessed in terms of the resulting changes to the military's mission, role, and organization.

The research identifies the revolutionary influence that still remains after the seventy-one year rule of the PRI. Additionally, it discusses some of the historical effects of civilian control within the institution and how the military is controlled under legislative rule today. Furthermore, it provides a review of military policy through the peaceful transition from the Institutional Revolutionary Party, referred as the PRI (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*), to the National Action Party, referred as the PAN (*Partido Acción Nacional*), and back to the PRI in 2012. Finally, it discusses the contemporary Mexican military in terms of how its loyalty and professionalism will propel it into the international scene despite the human rights violations.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
A.	OVERVIEW	1
B.	THESIS STATEMENT	3
C.	METHODOLOGY	4
D.	POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES	5
E.	HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.....	6
1.	Military during the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920)	7
2.	Military Post-Mexican Revolution	9
3.	Transition from the 1950s through 2000	13
II.	EVOLUTION OF THE MEXICAN MILITARY’S ROLE AND MISSION.....	17
A.	CIVILIAN CONTROL OF THE MEXICAN MILITARY	17
B.	MEXICAN POLITICAL POWER (1930–1950).....	19
C.	CHANGES IN POLITICAL INFLUENCE AND ROLE LEADING UP TO 2000	23
D.	ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARMY’S CORE MISSION.....	24
E.	SHIFTS IN CIVILIAN CONTROL OF THE ARMY	25
F.	ARMY’S ROLE (1980–1990).....	27
G.	ARMY’S MOVE TO A MORE CONTEMPORARY ROLE (2000– 2005)	29
H.	MILITARY’S ROLE AND MISSION UNDER PRESIDENT FELIPE CALDERÓN (2006–2012)	30
I.	MILITARY’S ROLE AND MISSION UNDER PRESIDENT ENRIQUE PEÑA NIETO (2012–PRESENT).....	32
J.	SUMMARY OF THE CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONSHIP.....	34
III.	CONCLUSION	37
A.	SUMMARY	37
B.	THE EFFECTS OF DEMOCRACY.....	37
C.	MEXICAN MILITARY OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY	39
1.	Military Transition from One-Party to Government Control.....	39
2.	Changes to the Modern Military’s Leadership and Structure	41
D.	THE MEXICAN MILITARY AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS.....	42
E.	MILITARY’S CONTEMPORARY LOYALTY AND ETHOS.....	46
F.	CHANGE IN FUTURE MISSION: MOVE FROM THE REVOLUTIONARY STRUCTURE?	47
1.	Change in Structure.....	47
2.	United Nations Involvement	48
	LIST OF REFERENCES	51
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	57

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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Mexican Military Zones.....	21
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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CNDH	Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos
GN	Gendarmería Nacional
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PME	Professional Military Education
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional
PAN	Partido Acción Nacional
SEDENA	Secretaría de Defensa Nacional
SEMAR	Secretaría de la Marina
UN	United Nations

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. OVERVIEW

The Mexican military has experienced an organizational transformation under civilian rule in the last eighty-five years. In explaining the seventy-one year rule of the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (Institutional Revolutionary Party; PRI), and the last fourteen years since the transition to the *Partido Acción Nacional* (National Action Party; PAN) and back to the PRI, this thesis will attempt to answer the primary thesis question: **do the events, rhetoric, and geopolitical representations of the Mexican Revolution still influence the contemporary narrative and ethos of the Mexican military?** Answering this question will involve a longitudinal review of the Mexican military after the Revolution, through the 1960s and 1970s, and finally from 2000 to the present as these were the periods where its role and mission changed the most while it transitioned between objective and subjective civilian control. The type of military control affected the utilization and development of the Mexican military into more of a tool of the state rather than only as the protector of a particular party.

This thesis explores the evolution of the Mexican military's organization and relationship with the state from the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920) to 2014. The Revolution provided a common ground for civilian and military elites, which indirectly shaped and circumscribed the role of the armed forces today. This revolutionary ideology, through subjective and objective civilian control, saw the professionalization and subordination of the armed forces, which enabled politicians to secure overall control. The fact that many generals after the Revolution became president helped organize and form the military under the PRI.¹

In addition to providing an overall historical review, the narrative focuses on the military's mission and organization from the end of Revolution to 2000, specifically in the last fourteen years, identifying any influence that still remains within the ruling

¹ Monica Serrano, "The Armed Branch of the State: Civil-Military Relations in Mexico," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 2 (May 1995): 429, accessed September 6, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/158121?origin=JSTOR-pdf>.

institution. It also provides a thorough review of civil-military relations with respect to the change of military policy through the peaceful transition from the PRI to the PAN in 2000 and 2006, and the shift of power back to the PRI in 2012.

After the Mexican Revolution and under the PRI, the army's loyalty and submission to the ruling party helped maintain the political stability in Mexico throughout the twentieth century. The fact that the army was not involved in political matters and helped sustain the regime made the civil-military relationship a mutual one.² Despite gaining autonomy in exchange for its obedience, the military's role and mission remained unclear through decades until the 1930s and 1940s. President Lázaro Cárdenas first assigned the army the role in *forjando la patria* (nation-building), in an attempt to expand the central government's control.³ During this time, the PRI strategically controlled the army for its use with the goal of professionalization of the armed forces for subordination under the civilian political elite; this allowed them to secure total control and manage the state's institution.⁴

Subsequently, the military maintained a great deal of political influence that declined by 1946. That influence, which the military attained since World War II, was a byproduct of the crisis management role it possessed. However, since the student uprisings in 1968, military leaders have been reluctant to participate in crisis situations, preferring to deflect these actions to local and state police authorities.⁵

As will be discussed later, the move towards a more professional force and the civil-military relationship attributed to the lack of military coup d'états in Mexico. Because of the lack of an external threat, requiring an outlined role and mission, the military remained the political tool of the PRI. Civilian control after the Revolution affected the army's mission and role and also gave the military some autonomy.

² Roderic Camp, *Generals in the Palacio* (London: Oxford University Press, 1992).

³ Stephen J. Wager and Army War College (U.S.), *The Mexican Military Approaches the 21st Century: Coping With a New World Order* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1994), 4. <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/1994/mexican/mexican.pdf>.

⁴ Serrano, "Armed Branch of the State," 433.

⁵ Wager and Army War College (U.S.), *Mexican Military Approaches the 21st Century*, 11.

B. THESIS STATEMENT

The Mexican military experienced many factors and events, which contributed to its contemporary organization and mission. After the Revolution, civilian control—both subjective and objective—affected the army’s role, which remained consistent until the twenty-first century. As Stephen Wager stated, “The civilianization of power took away the army’s direct role in political decision making, and the country’s new civilian leaders assigned the military the role of guarantor and protector of the overall system.”⁶

Some of these factors and events include the long seventy-one year rule of the PRI, the search for an identity and establishing its mission, and the move towards legislative rule in the twenty-first century. Throughout Mexico’s history, the army transitioned as the PRI’s political tool for increased power to an institution with domestic missions and roles, which were mainly maintaining internal security: suppressing the railroad workers’ strike in 1958, student movement in 1968, and the pacification of social unrest and combatting guerrilla uprisings in the southern state of Guerrero throughout the 1960s.⁷ Through the management of other crisis situations—the armed repression of dissident groups, counterinsurgency campaigns against rural guerrillas, and the breaking of major labor strikes—the military also endorsed the PRI and helped it remain in power. In return for the service and backing, the military received regular salary increases and a variety of generous non-wage benefits such as housing, medical care, loans, and subsidized consumer goods.⁸

With the change in power in 2000, President Vicente Fox (PAN party) dismantled the arrangement between the hegemonic PRI and the armed forces. He established a democratic civil-military relationship where the military did not answer to only one party, but instead was established under legislative oversight. This oversight created a means to

⁶ Wager and Army War College (U.S.), *Mexican Military Approaches the 21st Century*, 11.

⁷ Jordi Díez, Ian Nicholls, and Army War College (U.S.), *The Mexican Armed Forces in Transition* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2006), 9, accessed November 21, 2014, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB638.pdf>.

⁸ Wayne Cornelius and Ann L. Craig, *The Mexican Political System in Transition* (San Diego, CA: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 1991), 85–95. And Ricardo R. Gómez-Vilchis, “Democratic Transition and Presidential Approval in Mexico, *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 1 (2012), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/msem.2012.28.1.43>.

keep executive power in check and to establish hierarchy in the absence of a unified Department of Defense.⁹

Research shows that the military continues to be influenced by such events and actions that originated from the Revolution and as such, continue to affect its rule and rhetoric. Today, Mexico possesses a *sui generis* defense establishment that is made up of two institutions: the Department of National Defense (SEDENA), which includes the Army and the Air Force (FAM); and the Secretariat of the Marines (SEMAR), made up of the Navy (ARM). This unique style of organization dates back to 1940 when the Department of the Navy was established as an autonomous entity separate from the Ministry of War. The following year the Navy Department received full cabinet ministry status, which provided financial and operational independence to implement the country's maritime policy.¹⁰ Within the Department of National Defense's chain of command, the President became the commander-in-chief with direct and complete control over the armed forces via SEDENA and SEMAR. Today, each department continues to be headed by an active duty four-star general-secretary and admiral-secretary, respectively; however, its hierarchy became more established after World War II. In 1942, Mexico fought with the allies against Germany in exchange for economic aid, which helped strengthen the Mexican armed forces. Even though Mexico's contribution was mostly raw materials, labor, and exports, the relationship with the United States contributed to the establishment of a stronger military institution.¹¹

C. METHODOLOGY

Most of the research was accomplished through a comparative study approach, which included the review of a wide variety of primary and secondary sources that helped

⁹ Jordi Díez, "Legislative Oversight of the Armed Forces in Mexico." *Mexican Studies* 1 (Winter, 2008): 118, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/205252509?accountid=12702>.

¹⁰ Inigo Guevara Moyano and Army War College (U.S.), *Adapting, Transforming, and Modernizing Under Fire: The Mexican Military, 2006–11*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2011), 2, accessed September 9, 2014, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/download.cfm?q=1081>.

¹¹ Mary Patrice Koscielny and Center for International Studies (U.S.), *Mexico: Yesterday and Today* (Washington, DC: Center for International Studies, 1994), 26, accessed September 11, 2014, <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED398106.pdf>.

answer the research question. Through the review of these documents and sources that also included journal and newspaper articles, speeches, essays, and books, it was apparent that the literature was focused on the evolution and ideology associated with structuring the modern military from its origins in the Mexican Revolution. There were pertinent intersections, which connect the overall transition through three major periods—long rule under the PRI beginning in 1929, the 1960s and 1970s, and the transition of power and hierarchy in 2000.

D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

In general, the Mexican military experienced great change in its structure and mission under civilian rule since the Mexican Revolution. Through the reorganization after the Revolution to the lack of reform in 2000, the direction and purpose remained unclear until the twenty-first century with the PAN rule. In exploring the research question there are two hypotheses of what further research on the Mexican military will help prove.

The first hypothesis is the leadership and structure of the contemporary Mexican military was directly shaped by the events and actions of the Mexican Revolution. Through the research and literature reviewed, there are scholarly works which seem to explain the above: the means by how military leaders are selected now is not much different from after the Revolution, and the hierarchy of power and direction has also remained consistent. Even though the intent of the government is to place the most qualified military leaders in important military posts, it is not always the case depending on who is in office. More often, high military positions are filled by individuals who political leaders see as the most loyal and less demanding, than are qualified. Moreover, this standard of practice explains the reason for the lack of military coup d'états.

The second hypothesis outlines that because of the political and military instability of the Revolution and its conformity to civilian rule, the Mexican military has never gained political control like other militaries across other Latin American countries. The struggle for power from the Mexican Revolution to the end of the PRI, and subsequently from 2000 to 2014, highlights a major question associated with the

outcomes of such. The most apparent question post revolution to 2000 is: why has the military, regardless of power and support, or lack thereof, managed to remain loyal through the various transitions? Unlike many countries in Latin America that experienced military coup d'états, what kept Mexico's military from forcefully taking control of all power during the various periods of disorganization and uncertainty? Under civilian control, the military remained completely removed from the political arena after 1940 in exchange for autonomy that was not remarkably significant. Yet, despite the challenges and pleads for the military to have a more significant role in Mexico's system, political leaders have succeeded in keeping military leaders at bay by ensuring conformity in exchange for allowing additional internal control of operations and more say in budget discussions. Some factors, which have assured military conformity and loyalty, are the restriction of power that originated from the constitution of 1917. These politician-led initiatives kept radicals out of military roles, and ultimately prevented any military reform.

E. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

After gaining independence from Spain in the early nineteenth century, Mexico followed a path to nationalism—strengthened by conflicts with the United States and France—that developed through the Revolution of 1910. At the end of the nineteenth century, the victory over France brought a sense of identity and ethos, which allowed the military to be seen more as a political tool of authoritarians, trying to remain in power, rather than a force to combat external security threats to the country. The military began to form as Benito Juarez's forces, at Puebla on May 5, 1862, fought and won against a superior French army. This victory became more of a spiritual celebration than Mexico's actual Independence Day because the military ethos began to form under civilian rule.¹² Taking into consideration the optimism the victory formed, the official will or means to modernize or reform the military was delayed until the twentieth century.

¹² "The New Mexican Editorial: Cinco De Mayo: Celebrating a Shared Heritage," *The Santa Fe New Mexican*, May 05, 2002, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/331445725?accountid=12702>.

1. Military during the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920)

Following the French intervention, the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz came into power signifying the beginning of industrialization and a competition for power by elites. Despite the intentions to modernize the country—including the establishment of the railroad—the agrarian sector was at a disadvantage and thus began to demand power and support, which was petitioned but quickly ignored leading up to 1910. This period also gave rise to an attempt to unify the military to combat the revolutionary armies that were beginning to form, specifically under Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata. President Díaz “order and progress in Mexico between 1876 and 1910 caused the Revolution of 1910 in the Mexican border states . . . ‘order’ meant political centralization which came at the expense of local privileges and customs.”¹³

President Díaz’s push towards the rapid commercialization of the agrarian sector in the North, and later for a democratic Mexico—that included a political system that was unpopular with the elites—and his unwillingness to step down in 1910, gave rise to the Revolution. Francisco I. Maduro, a prominent statesman at the time, was the mastermind behind the Revolution against President Díaz, and his policies, utilized a military that was fragile and unprepared for a guerilla war.¹⁴ Despite the challenges and lack of resources, Maduro was able to gain support from those who were dissatisfied with the economic trends and unhappy with the Porfirian period. Later, as president, Maduro’s attempt to reform Mexico’s political system became difficult as it led to a civil war that the military could not suppress in Mexico post 1910.¹⁵ During the fight for power, the power pendulum shifted across three major parties that forced a government collapse and also led to the revolutionary accession of power. The retention of power occurred after the military collapse of the federal army in 1913 and 1914. As a result of the state’s failure to control or adequately manage the military, the power of the armed forces ceased to remain centralized and became fragmented among the competing revolutionary

¹³ David E. Lorey, *U.S.-Mexican Border in the Twentieth Century* (Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1999), 56.

¹⁴ Ibid, 59 and 62.

¹⁵ Ibid, 62–63.

chieftains. This move further prevented the armed forces from defining an already unclear role in security affairs.¹⁶

During the late nineteenth century, Mexico had one of the worst records of military intervention in politics, which allowed cacique-loyal armies to be used as political forces. They served not only as vehicles for social mobility, but also as means to control social unrest with the public dissatisfaction with the existing government. Even though Benito Juárez and Porfirio Díaz attempted to curb the military, it still remained a decisive element in politics through the influence it had on a selection of leaders until the mid-twentieth century.¹⁷ Later, the progressive civilianization of power took away the army's direct role in political decision-making, and the country's new civilian leaders assigned the military the role of guarantor and protector of the overall system.¹⁸

However, the lack of a strong, state-led military allowed the Mexican Revolution to occur and thus initiated the road of modernization. The Revolution introduced a period wherein the military began to move towards establishing its mission and role under President Álvaro Obregón. Following the uprising at Agua Prieta in July 1920—conflict over whether Venustiano Carranza's civilian moderates or Obregón's military radicals would rule Mexico—the *Obregónistas* (followers of Obregón) attempted to reorganize what was left of the army under its ideals. At that point, it became imperative to purge the army of left over *Carrancistas* (followers of Carranza) to break the resistance of general officers unhappy with the new government and its established objectives for future use.¹⁹ Subsequently, President Obregón's move to structure the military by putting generals on the federal payroll and providing social security to all soldiers, gradually removed the military's power and influence from the formal party system.²⁰ This move became an important juncture in Mexican politics as the government began removing the military's

¹⁶ Brian R. Hamnett, *Concise History of Mexico* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 237.

¹⁷ Daniel C. Levy and Kathleen Bruhn, *Mexico: The Struggle for Democratic Development*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 54.

¹⁸ Wager and Army War College (U.S.), *Mexican Military Approaches the 21st Century*, 1.

¹⁹ Edwin Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism: The Political Rise and Fall of the Revolutionary Army 1910–1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1968), 48 and 61–62.

²⁰ Levy and Bruhn, *Mexico: Struggle for Democratic Development*, 54–55.

influence from the political realm, which was the beginning of the revolutionary narrative.

The revolutionary narrative, which is discussed throughout this thesis, is referred to in terms of the military's loyalty and ethos and its civilian-military relationship. It includes elements such as revolutionary ideals, which allowed the military to remain subordinate to civilian authority and the establishment of the military's role as solely a domestic service army. Also, it directly relates to the various levels of autonomy bestowed to the armed forces and its administration since the Revolution.

Finally, Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata came into the picture and together pushed the ideals they wanted to accomplish through the conflict. The Mexican Revolution became the catalyst for identity-building and unity by fighting for individual rights and those rights of the poor. Trying to capitalize on the weak military and overall discontent, they were able to build armies strong enough to challenge the powerful elite and validate the weaknesses within the government.

2. Military Post-Mexican Revolution

The period after the Revolution was important in the formation of the Mexican military and its rhetoric. The military endured a reduction in force that included the removal of the old army, who had fought in the Revolution, and the creation of a force loyal to the ideals of the PRI. During the warring years, as a result of combining regional forces with the remnants of the national army, the total forces numbered over two hundred thousand with fifty thousand officers, some five hundred who claimed to be generals. President-elect Carranza (1917–1920) assigned the task of dissolving the Constitutionalist Army and creating a smaller national army to his Minister of War, General Álvaro Obregón. He created the Legion of Honor of the National Army, which allowed officers to retain their rank and still receive full pay for volunteering to leave active duty. Those that did not leave voluntarily were reviewed and many were sent to the reserves at half pay.²¹ President Carranza continued to reorganize the military but made little progress and change, which was attributed to the lack of military funding and

²¹ Lieuwen, "*Mexican Militarism*," 45.

budget. In perspective, during Obregón's presidency, the army received thirty-one percent of the government's budget compared to an all-time high of seventy-two percent of the national budget during Carranza's first year of presidency. In the last three years of the Carranza term the army received an average of sixty-five percent of the budget each year.²²

President Álvaro Obregón revamped the War College curriculum and began sending young officers overseas to receive important military education, which included learning modern military techniques. In building the army, he issued the first regulation uniforms to all members and instituted daily wear, which created the first military ethos and further allowed professionalization to occur. He also depoliticized the military by forbidding military participation in any political activity by assigning them to a more civic role of repairing railroads, and constructing roads and irrigation systems. This civic role became the mainstay of the Mexican army after Obregón left office in 1929, and also provided a means for the military to satisfy their revolutionary commitments helping develop the economic well-being of the country.

Following President Obregón's reduction of over half of the military in the mid-1920s, President Plutarco Elías Calles introduced important regulations governing the armed forces under civilian rule, and presented changes to civil-military relations. Some of those changes included reintroducing Porfirian rotation practices and establishing regulations that further governed armed institutions. After leaving office in 1929, President Calles founded the Party of the National Revolution (PNR: Partido Nacional Revolucionario), a political party that co-opted different segments of Mexican society into a corporatist state. Joaquín Amaro, secretary of the Army and Navy under Calles, was a focal point in making the armed forces more professional.²³

The military was then purposely omitted from the party since Calles thought the political sectors of labor, peasants, and bureaucrats would offset their influence. The new elite reinvigorated the state's effort to redefine the nation's identity, pursuing what

²² Lieuwen, "*Mexican Militarism*," 153

²³ Serrano, "Armed Branch of the State," 432.

President Calles touted as a “psychological revolution,” which would begin to use the military as a shield and tool for maintaining power for the PRI.²⁴ This period became the cornerstone for the organization of the Mexican military and how it would be controlled and managed throughout the twenty-first century. The perspective behind the military organization and structure involved a two-pronged approach that centered on the prevention of any future U.S. invasion upon Mexican national (territorial) sovereignty, as well as the promotion of a state-led and nationalistic economy.²⁵ This was referred to by Samuel P. Huntington as “the most striking example of political institution building by generals.”²⁶ During this period there was little distinction between the government and the military.

Even though there was a push to establish and formalize the military as an institution, the approach was restricted by future leaders who wanted it be relevant without giving it the ability to possess power and influence in politics. The first of those leaders who restricted the formal organization of the military was President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–1940). President Cárdenas accelerated professionalization of the armed forces through civilian control. His intent was to contain the military by neutralizing the weight and influence of the military through the incorporation of labor sectors within the PNR.²⁷ During his presidency, he established the formation of a military that was not to be seen as “professional soldiers . . . but rather as armed auxiliaries organized from humble classes . . . the duty of young officers [was] to broaden the collective spirit of the nation and help incorporate the humble into the whole program of the Revolution.”²⁸ Also during Cárdenas’ administration, one of the most important changes occurred where

²⁴ A. Bantjes, “Burning Saints, Molding Minds: Iconoclasm, Civic Ritual, and the Failed Cultural Revolution,” in W. Beezley, C. E. Martin and W. E. French (eds.), *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico* (Wilmington, DE: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1994), 265.

²⁵ James Rochlin, “Redefining Mexican ‘National Security’ During an Era of Postsovereignty,” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Local, Political* (Sept 1995): 371, accessed September 5, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40644838>.

²⁶ Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), 255.

²⁷ Serrano, “Armed Branch of the State,” 433.

²⁸ Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, 120.

the creation of four sectors within a reformed party (workers, popular, peasant, and the military) were formed. This change enabled the president to decrease the influence of the military as it became one of the four voting members. These developments placed an important emphasis on developing a deep sense of loyalty to the president and the official party, contributing to civilian supremacy.²⁹

When Cárdenas left office in 1940, the armed forces had been weakened and brought firmly under the control of the national party. Throughout the 1940s, the military continued to be removed from the political process as they agreed to support civilian authority.³⁰ Following his tenure, it was not until the end of the PRI rule in 2000 that President Fox attempted to organize the contemporary military more as a structure to combat domestic challenges and issues across the country. During the first PAN presidency, the formal transition of the military under legislative rule began. Legislative rule further developed under two consecutive terms of the PAN and most recently with the PRI presidency, which highlighted changes in the military's modern structure of the last fourteen years.

By the 1940s, the Mexican Army was thought to be sufficiently organized and equipped to meet the demands of protecting the country and its territories. Just what would be its potential value in Hemisphere Defense was a matter of some conjecture, since in the past there had been little expectation that it would be called upon to repel an invasion in force. After World War II, the military saw improvements to its structure as it was strengthened to combat future domestic threats, but its organization remained status quo until 2000.³¹ By the early 1950s, the military institution had been unified, disciplined, and subordinated to civilian power. This relationship between the official party and the military, which is sometimes referred to as a "pact" by some scholars on

²⁹ Díez, "Legislative Oversight," 121. See also Monica Serrano, "The Armed Branch of the State: Civil-Military Relations in Mexico," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 2 (1995): 432.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Koscielnny, *Mexico: Yesterday and Today*, 26.

civil-military relations in Mexico, became a strong and harmonious association that lasted for several decades as both parties respected their end of the deal.³²

The military was called on by the PRI to help out through difficult times. This was the case in 1958, when they were asked to suppress a railroad workers' strike, and again in the early 1970s, when tasked with the "elimination" of guerrillas, especially those in the southern state of Guerrero. But these interventions were temporary and the armed forces returned to the barracks once the situation was stabilized. In all of these cases, the army acted upon the request of the civilian authority without affecting the pact.³³

3. Transition from the 1950s through 2000

The time period after President Cárdenas' presidency validated the need to control the military as various countries across Latin America in the twentieth century experienced military coup d'états and democratization. In Mexico, however, the military remained restricted in flexing its power despite the overall discontent with the government and social problems the country experienced. Even though the military did not intervene in politics, it was consistently mobilized by the government to pacify some of the social unrest and movements. In order to prevent shirking, "when the military, whether through laziness, indolence, or preventable incompetence, does not do what the civilian has requested, or not in the way the civilian wanted, or in such a way as to undermine the ability of the civilian to make future decisions," the Mexican government provided military prerogatives.³⁴ Monica Serrano explains how the military remained out of politics:

The implications of changes in tasks and responsibilities assigned to or taken by the military have been evident in the evolution of military prerogatives, from distortions in promotions patterns, to surges in military demands leading to increases in the military budget, in the size of the armed forces, the development of military industries and a more forceful

³² Díez, "Legislative Oversight," 121.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Peter D. Feaver, "Crisis as Shirking: An Agency Theory Explanation of the Souring of American Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces & Society* 24 (1998): 409–410.

participation in policy and decision-making. Indeed, the control of rail workers, strikes during the 1950s, as well as of student movements in Guerrero and San Luis Potosi, and the more recent participation of the armed forces in Chiapas were soon reflected in defence procurements. The role of the armed forces in counterinsurgency throughout the 1960s and during the 1968 student movement was subsequently compensated by increases in the total number of promotions, new procurements and a new expansion involving 10,000 troops. Similarly, throughout the 1980s a new trend became evident which involved the military actively in decisions concerning public order.³⁵

By the 1950s, the Mexican military was under firm civilian control. It was a professional fighting force that completely removed its officers from all political aspirations.³⁶ Although civilian control minimized the military's influence in politics, it continued to have a great effect on the military's domestic role, specifically in domestic policing after 1960. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Mexican army was forced to fulfill roles that were beyond the scope of their experience. PRI leadership deployed the army to pacify and combat student protest movements and revolutionary guerrilla groups, which for the first time negatively stained the military's image and purpose. In the Tlatelolco massacre of 1968, the army used extreme violence against the civilian population, where dozens of people disappeared, and no action or accountability occurred. This event was a crucial turning point because it highlighted the deficiencies within the military judicial system. Until recently, military personnel enjoyed immunity from prosecution within the civilian judicial system. However, because of the human rights violations plaguing the institution, civil suits are rising and the old civilian-military pact is beginning to break down.³⁷

According to the constitution, the armed forces have three central objectives guiding their deployment: defending national territory against an external threat; providing humanitarian support to the civilian population after natural disasters; and guaranteeing internal security and social peace. The first two objectives received

³⁵ Serrano, "Armed Branch of the State," 439.

³⁶ Aaron W. Navarro, *Political Intelligence and the Creation of Modern Mexico, 1938–1954* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 2010), 79–80.

³⁷ "Mexico: Military Resists Greater Civilian Control," Oxford: Oxford Analytica Ltd, 2002, accessed October 7, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/192317850?accountid=12702>.

widespread support and were uncontroversial. The continuing role of the military in guaranteeing internal order, however, came under increased scrutiny due to the poor handling of the human rights situation. Mexican civil society had been demanding greater accountability from the armed forces and a review of their participation in activities that may be better suited to civilian authorities.³⁸

³⁸ “Mexico: Military Resists Greater Civilian Control.”

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II. EVOLUTION OF THE MEXICAN MILITARY'S ROLE AND MISSION

A. CIVILIAN CONTROL OF THE MEXICAN MILITARY

In comparison to other Latin American countries, Mexico has been a model of civil-military harmony. The fact that Mexico has not experienced a successful coup since 1920 demonstrates that this relationship between the two institutions has been a mutual one; civilians control the politics of the nation, and the military, while subordinate to civilian control, demonstrates the highest levels of professionalism and loyalty to control.³⁹ The civilian-military relationship in Mexico originates from the early nineteenth century after Mexico gained its independence. After the Mexican Revolution in the early twentieth century, two variables emerged to further establish the relationship: societal experiences and how these related to the military's narrative and role.

The Mexican military experienced a transition from objective to subjective civilian control, which affected its role and mission from the end of the seventy-one year rule of the PRI in 2000 to 2014. To explain this transition and its effects, it is important to define both objective and subjective control, discuss how civilian control originated in Mexico, and finally explain how civilian control affected the roles and missions of the armed forces across the various time frames, which culminates with the presidency of Enrique Peña Nieto.

Samuel P. Huntington explains objective and subjective civilian control of the armed forces. Under objective control civilians dictate military security policy, but allow the military to determine the objectives required to implement and manage itself. Huntington mentions that objective rule stems from "the institutional separation of the military forces from society . . . [maintaining] the proper distance between the military forces and politics, and their professional autonomy."⁴⁰ Under objective civilian control,

³⁹ Linda Alexander Rodriguez, *Rank and Privilege: The Military and Society in Latin America* (Wilmington, DE.: Scholarly Resources, 1994), 219–220.

⁴⁰ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-military Relations* (Cambridge, MA.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 260–261.

“[civilians] not only reduce the power of the military to the lowest possible level vis-à-vis all civilian groups, but it also maximizes the likelihood of achieving military security.”⁴¹ By separating political functions from military decision-making, both are more respected; political leaders do not interfere in military operations, and military commanders do not influence policy-making. This deepens military professionalism—in terms of expertise, service responsibility, and corporateness—in the eyes of civilians. In turn, the military is politically neutral and produces the lowest level of power with respect to all civilian groups.

To not totally disregard the military’s role, a tradeoff occurs: civilians grant officers autonomy when they demonstrate professional aptitude; in return, officers show respect and loyalty to the politician’s authority.⁴² The values of loyalty and patriotism placed the nation, the state and its institutions, and the military in descending order of importance; the state retaining its superiority over the military was a derivative of the Revolution.⁴³

Under subjective civilian control, however, the military is in essence civilianized; it becomes a mirror of the state in a variety of forms. Through the denial of the independent military sphere, civilians aim to maximize the governing political leader’s power—usually through some particular civilian group or groups—by encouraging members of the armed forces to identify with their goals or political ideologies. Subjective civilian control also creates a conflict between civilian control and military security requirements; intensified security threats can lead to increased military imperatives where it becomes even more difficult to assert civilian rule. In other words, enhanced civilian control under this type undermines military security which in turn reduces an independent military sphere.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Huntington, *Soldier and the State*, 83–86.

⁴² Ibid., 85.

⁴³ Rodriguez, *Rank and Privilege*, 224.

⁴⁴ Huntington, *Soldier and the State*, 83–85.

B. MEXICAN POLITICAL POWER (1930–1950)

After the Revolution, the military maintained a great deal of political influence; by 1946 that influence, in terms of overt control, had declined. After 1968, the military's indirect political influence increased again, but this time it had no effect on politics, forcing it to remain subordinate to civilian control. Military officers were a byproduct of a larger society that, through its values and attitudes, affected how civilians viewed their roles. Through a historical lens, the military's role and involvement in internal politics determined the civil-military patterns, which helped create the present-day military in Mexico.⁴⁵

The Mexican military in the late 1930s and 1940s was a focal point in politics as it secured support for the ruling party in return for influence in the political arena; during this time period there was a stint of subjective control that later transitioned more towards objective control. Under the PRI, the military was established as a pretense to secure political power; its most important role was “an agent of social and political control.”⁴⁶ In 1940, the military's political power began to decrease as civilians realized that the military's influence in politics was hindering their progress. The officers' politicking and entrepreneurialism challenged and discredited the central government, which forced them to adopt a more apolitical identity for the army.⁴⁷

By 1950, politicians took away most of the influence the military once had by creating four sectors within the reformed party: workers, popular, peasant, and military. This allowed the president to decrease the influence by restricting the military to only a small portion of the vote and influence within the party.⁴⁸ For military leadership, this lack of influence further validated the need to avoid political repression and economic reprisals by bandwagoning and providing additional support to the electoral power. In

⁴⁵ Roderic Ai Camp, “Mexico,” in *The Political Role of the Military: An International Handbook*, ed. Constantine P. Danopoulos and Cynthia Watson (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 271.

⁴⁶ Thomas Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization in Post-revolutionary Mexico, 1920–1960* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 168.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Díez, “Legislative Oversight,” 121.

exchange for this national loyalty, the military for the most part enjoyed autonomy.⁴⁹ Once the officer's political powers were taken, the PRI regime could regulate differences between the military's official rhetoric and reality. However, the military—depending on their loyalty—could still inflict some influence and retain operational autonomy.⁵⁰ The infighting in the 1940s and 1950s restricted the army's unity and created political rules that guaranteed an incomplete separation from the government.

President Lázaro Cárdenas' attempt to formalize class identity and the Mexican army's solidarity eventually disappeared. Instead, *Cardenistas* criticized the military structure, calling it an organization of workers and peasants who were “led by idealists of the middle class.”⁵¹ This structure, based on revolutionary ideology, was embraced by soldiers who “spread sincerity, honor, and virtue . . . [to act] like ‘an elder brother of the Mexican family.’”⁵²

Even though the military structure underwent changes, civilians continued to minimize its influence and involvement in society. However, the “formal civilian supremacy did not strip the military of all political influence as they operated behind the scenes to facilitate political communication and conflict resolution.”⁵³ Since the nineteenth century, politicians accomplished this by constantly moving commanders across the country throughout various “army zones of command,” which became more evident during President Cárdenas' presidency.⁵⁴ Mexico is broken down into military zone commands—forty army zones and twenty-two naval zones—which are grouped together among twelve military regions and under a senior zone commander. Although

⁴⁹ Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization*, 114.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 168

⁵¹ Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization*, 83.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Díez, “Legislative Oversight,” 118.

⁵⁴ Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization*, 85–86.

each state, including Mexico City, has a military zone, many states are subdivided into two or more zones; see Figure 1 for the breakdown.⁵⁵



Figure 1. Mexican Military Zones⁵⁶

He also heavily emphasized the military's role in education and public works, rather than as the guardian of national order.⁵⁷ "Mexican military education enforced the values and norms needed under the military institution and it taught necessary skills while restricting political knowledge, interest, and efficacy."⁵⁸ The move to restrict influence further normalized objective control over the Mexican army.

⁵⁵ Roderic Ai Camp, "MILITARIZING MEXICO: Where is the Officer Corps Going?," Policy Papers on the Americas Volume X Study 1 for the Center for Strategic and International Studies(CSIS), Washington, DC, January 15, 1999, accessed January 12, 2015, <http://dspace.africaportal.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/966/1/Militarizing%20Mexico%20Where%20is%20the%20Officer%20Corps%20Going.pdf?1>.

⁵⁶ Global Security Org, "Military Zones," accessed January 13, 2015, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/mexico/images/map-zona-militar.jpg>

⁵⁷ Jordi Díez, Ian Nicholls, and Army War College (U.S.), *The Mexican Armed Forces in Transition* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2006), 9, accessed November 21, 2014, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB638.pdf>.

⁵⁸ Rodriguez, *Rank and Privilege*, 223.

The military's role, under the government's direction, was in the beginning stages of becoming structuralized—through demilitarization from politics—due to objective civilian control. The military was utilized across the country under different pretenses; its core role was the application of force and terror against society, which sustained the power of the elites. The army assumed the police role in exchange for autonomy, but this new responsibility did not negate the fact that it was being tasked to do duties the constitution did not explicitly outline. The constitution did not separate military responsibilities from the civil judicial system, which allowed the governing party to assign those tasks to the military.⁵⁹ The military served as a pseudo police force since various states did not have the resources to build their own civilian institution and also exerted high levels of violence, as was the case in Puebla from 1940–1957. Here the military became the police force with deeply rooted ideals in politics, where the army assumed crucial tasks in social control against rebellions and indirect political tasks—such as protection of local authorities and mediation of municipal disputes.⁶⁰ This police work was political and allowed officers' judicial autonomy by allowing them the ability to decide the details of where and how their policing mission would be accomplished.⁶¹ The autonomy to dictate the army's mission was an example of subjective control.

The civilian utilization of the army and direct militarization in conflictive municipalities—through the use of violence—validated the need for roles outside of military security. The inevitable use of military force domestically, in the place of civil organizations, debunked the post-revolutionary political culture, which called for zero military involvement in politics. Subsequently, this retention of militarization prevented any military coup d'états during the Cold War, through stability and general consensus between the two organizations.⁶² Professionalism and loyalty instilled in the military restricted them from challenging the shift in non-military roles despite the change in leadership.

⁵⁹ Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization*, 116 and 119.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 122, 124, and 127.

⁶¹ Ibid., 85.

⁶² Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization*, 143.

Though this territorial deployment followed a pattern established in 1924, shortly after the end of the Mexican revolution, it remained the most viable form of accomplishing the Army's three main missions. The strategic rationale became the need for a "blanket of forces" that provided a multi-layer defense system against a hypothetically larger and superior invading force. Later, the forces would execute light infantry and guerrilla-type operations in order to defeat the invader through attrition. Also, the Army's presence in every major population center, and in some of the most remote places in the country, allowed it to have a real-time power projection capability to counter an insurrection.⁶³

C. CHANGES IN POLITICAL INFLUENCE AND ROLE LEADING UP TO 2000

Compared to other Latin American countries, Mexico's armed forces were formally under civilian control during the rule of the PRI. Particular developments that unfolded after the Mexican Revolution resulted in a political arrangement between the civilian government, under the PRI, and the armed forces, where the latter agreed to abstain from the deliberation of political matters in exchange for autonomy from civilian authorities—as was evident under objective control. This distinct arrangement helped explain the stability of the Mexican political system and the fact that, unlike most other Latin American countries, Mexico did not experience a military coup d'état in the latter part of the twentieth century. However, formal civilian supremacy did not strip the military of all political influence as they operated behind the scenes to facilitate political communication, stability, and conflict resolution. Moreover, civil-military relations during PRI rule were also characterized by significant levels of both institutional and political autonomy of the military over its internal operations, training and promotions, as well as a high level of discretion in expenditures and equipment procurement. Although the military was subordinate to civilian authorities during PRI rule, civilian supremacy was, therefore, far from objective civilian control.⁶⁴

⁶³ Moyano, *Adapting, Transforming, and Modernizing Under Fire*, 7–8.

⁶⁴ Díez, "Legislative Oversight," 118.

Since the Revolution and throughout the twentieth century, the Mexican military maintained a significant political role and influence in Mexican politics—under subjective control. This influence, which became more evident after World War II, was attributed to the military's role of domestic crisis management in the absence of external threats to the country.⁶⁵ This new role highlighted the military's lack of training outside of war and conflict, and its inability to sheath the physical aspects of its operations.

In the 1940s, President Ávila Camacho restrained the political goals of the officer corps denying sectorial status to the military and decreasing its electoral power, which was objective control.⁶⁶ The military's political influence remained intact through the civic duties it was tasked to accomplish, which included the war on drugs during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, and a force for provincial stability and civilian leadership's enforcement arm.⁶⁷ Domestically, the role of the armed forces began to change in the late 1970s with the increased flow of illegal drugs and corruption within the police forces. To help offset this trend, the government created *Plan Condor*, which directly assigned military resources to combat drugs.⁶⁸ Civic responsibilities and development roles—the provision of food and health services in poor and remote areas, infrastructure building, and environmental protection—established important and internal roles performed by the Mexican military. These civic actions stemmed from Mexico's need to reach rural areas, especially during natural disasters.⁶⁹

D. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARMY'S CORE MISSION

After World War II and before the end of the PRI rule in 2000, the Mexican military experienced a more defined mission set that was different from its revolutionary upbringing. It saw three critical challenges to its overall structure and internal security,

⁶⁵ Wager and Army War College (U.S.), *Mexican Military Approaches the 21st Century*, 11–12.

⁶⁶ Jorge Lozoya, *El Ejército Mexicano, 1911–1965* (México City: Colegio de México, 1970), 68–69 in Aaron Navarro, *Political Intelligence and the Creation of Modern Mexico, 1938–1954* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1973), 99.

⁶⁷ David Ronfeldt, ed., *The Modern Mexican Military: A Reassessment* (La Jolla: Center for United States–Mexican Studies, University of California at San Diego, 1984), 1–31.

⁶⁸ Díez, Nicholls, and Army War College (U.S.), *Mexican Armed Forces in Transition*, 33.

⁶⁹ Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, <http://www.sedena.gob.mx/>, accessed November 20, 2014.

which also affected its mission: the student movement of 1968, the rural insurgency in the 1970s, and most recently the struggle with drug trafficking.⁷⁰ As was evident through these cases, the military was tested under subjective civilian control as its post-revolutionary mission focused on the repression of the population and taking a more active role as the police. An increase “in the Mexican army’s size, budget, policing roles, and political leverage indicate[d] a remilitarization of the Mexican state,” provided autonomy, but also downgraded the civilian control over it.⁷¹

Moving away from the revolutionary narrative, the armed forces began to lose fear of civilian authority, which led to an increase in human rights violations. Widespread military killings of civilians demonstrated weaknesses within the political leadership and independence within the armed forces. Since the government did not properly handle domestic conflicts and student uprisings, it tasked the army to confront the demonstrations without an established set of guidelines or rules of engagements. In the absence of a plan to combat these challenges, the use of force and violence became the norm, which left hundreds of students and civilians dead, in many cases, for simply questioning government leadership. As a result of these actions, the military lost prestige and the civilian population began to lose faith and confidence in the institution.⁷² These events highlighted the severing of the link between the military and the state, which changed since the Revolution. Some of these cases, including details about the “Tlatelolco Massacre,” will be discussed later.

E. SHIFTS IN CIVILIAN CONTROL OF THE ARMY

David Ronfeldt referred to the military’s political influence, and the duties it carried out in exceptional circumstances, as “residual political roles.” Even under formal civilian control, the military continued to influence politics and policy in times of crises or when called upon by civilian authorities. Importantly, the civilian-military pact after the Revolution provided the military a significant degree of autonomy over its internal

⁷⁰ Wager and Army War College, *Mexican Military Approaches*, 12.

⁷¹ Alicia Hernández Chávez, “Origen y ocaso del ejército porfiriano,” *Historia Mexicana* 39 (1989), 285.

⁷² Camp, “Mexico,” 274–275.

operations, training, and promotions, as well as a high level of discretion in expenditures. This autonomy allowed the military to begin making its own decisions, which allowed it to gain some independence. However, the unconditional backing of the revolutionary élite, and of the revolutionary goals, came in exchange for autonomy in the inner workings of the armed forces. Due to that autonomy, the military operated under a great deal of secrecy vis-à-vis the government and society at large. Under the PRI, civil-military relations in Mexico were far from the ideal type of objective civilian control. In effect, the anomalies that accompanied civilian control under this rule have been referred by some scholars as demonstrating a level of subjective control rather than the latter.⁷³

As mentioned previously, because of the lack of external threats and its geopolitics, the Mexican military maintained a post-revolutionary mission that was focused on domestic and internal threats. Accordingly, the Mexican army and air force had five general missions: 1) Defense of the integrity, independence, and sovereignty of the nation; 2) Internal security; 3) Civic action and social projects that assist in the development of the nation; 4) Assist the population in case of public necessity; and 5) Assistance to the population in natural disasters. The navy on the other hand had only two missions per the Mexican constitution: “use of naval power to ensure external defense and to assist in internal security.”⁷⁴ Although the Revolution helped establish direct missions for the armed forces, the lack of civilian-regulated autonomy and accountability would later cause friction between the two institutions.

The Mexican military as a whole enjoyed military autonomy in defense organization. As David Pion-Berlin argues,

Military political autonomy . . . refers to the military’s aversion towards or even defiance of civilian control. While it is part of the state, the military often acts as if it were above and beyond the constitutional authority of the government. The degree of political autonomy is a measure of the military’s determination to strip civilians of their political prerogatives and claim these for itself. As the armed forces accumulate

⁷³ Serrano, “Armed Branch of the State,” 434 and David. Ronfeldt (ed.), *Modern Mexican Military A Reassessment*, (La Jolla: Center for United States –Mexican Studies, University of California at San Diego, 1984).

⁷⁴ Díez, Nicholls, and Army War College (U.S.), *Mexican Armed Forces in Transition*, 21–22.

powers, they become increasingly protective of their gains. The more valuable and entrenched their interests are, the more vigorously they will resist the transfer of control over these to a democratic leader.⁷⁵

As such, military leadership still controls military promotions, retirements, and appointments today. Since the Revolution, these actions have remained the exclusive domain of the armed forces themselves, with little or no civilian intervention.⁷⁶ Although the military has been able to retain some autonomy and control on its operational aspects, to maintain the relationship with politicians, it has been forced to take on roles and adjust its mission towards what is required from it. Starting in 1966, the Army began implementing disaster relief operations as part of its mission portfolio and participated in national vaccination, literacy, nutrition, and reforestation campaigns, which created a strong bond between the civilian population and the military.⁷⁷ The lack of external threats forced the government to use the military in this capacity, which again was reminiscent of the revolutionary narrative.

F. ARMY'S ROLE (1980–1990)

In the 1980s, the size and budget of the Mexican military grew with additional assigned policing roles and political leverage until the 1990s—all while under subjective control. Despite demilitarization, the growth of crime, insurgency, and drug trafficking in the 1990s called for militarization of domestic policing. The political system succeeded in adjusting the military's role as public trust was seen to be superior to that of the corrupt police forces.⁷⁸

The military continued to find ways to maintain its influence in the government due to the decline of political posts after President Carlos Salinas de Gortari took power in 1988. With that, the military reached an informal accord between military and civilian leaders. This accord established the means by which both organizations would coexist.

⁷⁵ David Pion-Berlin, "Military Autonomy and Emerging Democracies in South America," *Comparative Politics* 25 (October 1992): 84.

⁷⁶ Pion-Berlin, "Military Autonomy and Emerging Democracies," 87.

⁷⁷ Moyano, *Adapting, Transforming, and Modernizing Under Fire*, 8.

⁷⁸ Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization*, 172.

First, the military received autonomy from civilian leadership non-intervention in internal military affairs: in expenditures (once budget allocations were given to the armed forces); ability of officers to moonlight at other jobs; and in the designation of leaders through promotions.⁷⁹ Second, civilian leadership would publicly praise the armed forces as “an honored and prestigious institution in Mexican life . . . identifying the military as a loyal, stalwart partner of the state.”⁸⁰ Third, the military would carry out unrelated actions professionally that were designed to sustain civilian leadership, such as impose electoral results on the Mexican people, become the guardian of ballots on Election Day (even in cases of fraud), maintain order or pacify those civil conflicts involving electoral fraud, and suppress dissidence (student, labor, or otherwise).⁸¹

In return for civilian acceptance of these accords, the military would not demand sharp increases in the budget, support a small force and technologically-sufficient weaponry, and most importantly carry out civilian-mandated police force function.⁸² These accords would come into play when the military, with subpar training and resources, would undertake a role that is still present in the twenty-first century. As far as the military’s role under President Salinas de Gortari, its focus remained on the anti-narcotics campaign with an increase in interdiction.⁸³

In *Mexican Militarism: The Political Rise and Fall of the Revolutionary Army, 1910–1940*, Edwin Lieuwen attributed the depoliticizing of the Mexican military to five factors: “(1) internecine warfare amongst the rival generals, (2) professionalization of the young and middle-rank officers, (3) development of civilian power counterpoised, particularly labor and peasants, (4) institutionalization of the political system from 1928–1940, and (5) the key role of General Cárdenas himself in bringing about the depoliticization result.”⁸⁴ Contrary to Lieuwen’s findings, Roderic Ai Camp said that in

⁷⁹ Camp, “México,” 275.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Díez, Nicholls, and Army War College (U.S.), *Mexican Armed Forces in Transition*, 33.

⁸⁴ Lieuwen, “*Mexican Militarism*,” 52.

fact, “the military never intervened in politics and thus was never removed from politics in the 1930s and 1940s.”⁸⁵

G. ARMY’S MOVE TO A MORE CONTEMPORARY ROLE (2000–2005)

While Mexican generals have obeyed rather than deliberated, the absence of coups d’états does not mean that the army has been indifferent to political decisions. Traditionally, they have expressed their views to the president or secretary of interior behind closed doors. Such sub rosa contacts, however, ended during the Fox administration (2000–2006). Under President Fox, Defense Secretary de la Vega formally presented the activities of SEDENA to a congressional committee for the first time in its history.⁸⁶ While this move legitimized the armed forces to the entire political leadership, it was a clear difference in the post-revolutionary structure it was accustomed to. Soon after the first official congressional brief, rather than visit Congress, General Guillermo Galván invited legislators to meet with him on military installations.⁸⁷ Again, this was a proactive move from the armed forces to sustain the relationship between the two institutions and also validate some of its autonomy.

President Fox’s defense secretary, General Gerardo Clemente R. Vega García (2000–2006), followed the practice of briefing civilian cabinet members by appearing before a congressional committee to discuss his ministry’s interests, goals, and performance.⁸⁸ Despite President Fox’s pledge to reduce the military’s involvement in the fight against drug trafficking during his election campaign, once in office nothing changed. On the contrary, the military was given additional responsibilities that were explicitly the responsibility of other civil institutions. He used special military battalions

⁸⁵ Camp, *Generals in the Palacio*, 7.

⁸⁶ George W. Grayson and Army War College (U.S.). Strategic Studies Institute, *The Impact of President Felipe Calderón’s War On Drugs On the Armed Forces: The Prospects for Mexico’s “militarization” and Bilateral Relations* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2013), 59, accessed October 28, 2014, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubid=1137>.

⁸⁷ Grayson and Army War College (U.S.), *Impact of President Felipe Calderón’s War On Drugs*, 59.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

and intelligence to pursue and arrest drug traffickers, and further utilized the army to dismantle and track cartels under commando operations.⁸⁹

President Fox's lack of action validated the need not to maintain a revolutionary narrative, but to move more towards transparency. In 2003, with the Access to Information Act, he required the armed forces to release information to the public to lessen the secrecy of their operations. Although this change did not fundamentally affect the civil-military pact, it still allowed the military the autonomy to keep some of the prerogatives it had under the PRI because of President Fox's passivity and weak leadership.⁹⁰ Changes in military control under the PAN maintained some of the revolutionary narrative, which kept the military's mission under civilian control.

H. MILITARY'S ROLE AND MISSION UNDER PRESIDENT FELIPE CALDERÓN (2006–2012)

Immediately after President Felipe Calderón assumed office in December of 2006, the military's role shifted again and almost entirely towards combating organized crime and the drug cartels. Although the fight against organized crime was clearly a law enforcement matter, the absence of an effective and trustworthy police force required the army, navy, and air force to use supplementary forces to defend the civilian population and enforce the rule of law. Even though the federal government strove to stand up a capable police force in order to relieve and eventually replace the military, that goal was never accomplished during the Calderón administration.

The armed forces continued to be the main implementers of the National Security policy, which was aimed at employing the use of force to disrupt the operational capacity of organized crime. Their strong institutional tradition, professionalism, submission to political control, and history of interaction with the population—mainly through disaster relief efforts—made them the most trusted institution in Mexican society. Mexico's armed forces have long been used as an instrument of the state to implement all kinds of public policies at the national level, from emergency vaccinations, to post-earthquake

⁸⁹ Díez, Nicholls, and Army War College (U.S.), *Mexican Armed Forces in Transition*, 33.

⁹⁰ Díez, *Legislative Oversight*, 125–126.

rescue, to reforestation campaigns.⁹¹ As an instrument of the state, the military was also tasked with the role of running penitentiaries and overseeing customs operations because of the trust and loyalty it possessed. Its revolutionary loyalty and ethos remained intact, which helped it sustain its role and mission under the state.

In response to seizures, escapes, and excessive control of the prisons by organized crime groups, along with corruption amongst leadership, the army was dispatched to control the institutions. Such conditions prompted the government to dispatch army units to conduct searches in penitentiaries and sometimes take control of the institutions themselves. In mid-August 2009, General Felipe de Jesús Espitia, commander of the Fifth Military Zone, announced that troops would replace civilian administrators and guards at Cereso of Aquiles Serdán, located in the heart of the state of Chihuahua. This action followed the resignation of the warden after three of his bodyguards were killed.⁹² Military men now serve as directors of the penal facilities in the three largest cities in Quintana Roo. In late April 2011, General Carlos Bibiano Villa Castillo, the state's secretary of public security, placed officers in charge of the Cereso in Chetumal (Captain José de Jesús Moreno Abad), the Cereso in Cancún (General Eulalio Rodríguez Valdivia), and the jails in Playa del Carmen (Second Captain José Luis y Peniche Novelo) and Cancún (Captain Higinio Sánchez Baltazar).⁹³ Imposing military rule and organization in prisons contributed to better order and security, which is still a post-revolutionary role and mission.

The spread of corruption, especially in combating the drug war “redefine[d] the military’s potential role, and expose[d] it to forces that [could] threaten its internal cohesiveness and loyalty.”⁹⁴ After 2000, Presidents Fox and Calderón sought to fight corruption amongst customs agents—a Herculean challenge because of the lucrative payments to officials who either close their eyes to smuggling or took part in the crime.

⁹¹ Moyano, Inigo Guevara., and Army War College (U.S.), Strategic Studies Institute, *Adapting, Transforming, and Modernizing Under Fire: The Mexican Military, 2006–11* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2011), vii, accessed October 28, 2014,

⁹² Grayson and Army War College, *Impact of President Felipe Calderón’s War*, 64.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 65

⁹⁴ Camp, *Generals in Palacios*, 58.

To combat this trend, the armed forces took over the functions of the fiscal police in forty-nine land ports across the northern border in August 2009; the navy began also overseeing customs operations in seaports.⁹⁵ The army on the other hand was tasked to accomplish other duties, which were more inland. Unlike the navy, the army was tasked to guard and protect elections, create a brigade of firefighters for emergency use, and also provide security at soccer championships.⁹⁶ Although the armed forces helped minimize corruption from within some of these governmental agencies, military leadership continued rotating zone commanders more frequently to prevent senior leaders from falling into the same situation.⁹⁷ This counter-action and shift in roles prevented some corruption, which was another change since the revolution.

I. MILITARY'S ROLE AND MISSION UNDER PRESIDENT ENRIQUE PEÑA NIETO (2012–PRESENT)

After entering office, President Peña Nieto made it clear that he wanted a new security strategy where the military would stop assuming the role of the police. He mentioned that both the army and navy would continue to fight drug cartels, but would change President Calderón's strategy of direct confrontation to reduce violence.⁹⁸ His intent was to return thousands of soldiers back to the barracks, a move that SEDENA applauded, in light of the NGO criticism of human rights abuses and corruption, as well as the prevalence of mental illness among troops.⁹⁹ At the same time, he recognized that the involvement of the navy and the support forces of the Federal Police could grow in light of their success in fighting criminals during the last few decades.¹⁰⁰ President Peña Nieto unveiled a "six point security initiative . . . that would shift the primary focus of

⁹⁵ Grayson and Army War College, *Impact of President Felipe Calderón's War*, 65–66.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 66–68.

⁹⁷ Camp, *Generals in Palacios*, 59.

⁹⁸ "Mexican president says army will continue in fight against drug traffickers," *Canadian Press*, December 4, 2012, accessed November 25, 2014, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=16&sid=9dacf38c-9cc9-47f0-95d8-31e4f064787e%40sessionmgr4005&hid=4114&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#d b=bwh&AN=MYO181328071512>.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Grayson and Army War College, *Impact of President Felipe Calderón's War*, 70.

Mexico's drug wars from that of hunting down cartels and their capos to preventing and curbing murders, kidnappings, and extortion."¹⁰¹ This move became the first real attempt to legitimize the role of the military by removing it from a mission that has been unjustified since after the Revolution, and under PRI rule, and replacing it with a new organization.

By strengthening the government's ability to govern, creating a paramilitary National Gendarmerie (GN) to combat violence and instability, and reconfiguring police functions, President Peña Nieto hopes to alleviate some of the workload the military has endured in the past. The establishment of the Gendarmerie—a new security force of potentially forty thousand police and military members—will not create tension between the civil-military relationship or require a change in the constitution to establish a single secretary over both the army and the navy.¹⁰² Although the president intends to reshape the military's role, the military will continue to plead to Congress the need to amend the Code of Military Justice to explicitly justify and allow the military's involvement in combating cartels. Ultimately, the military requires protection from NGOs who have accused senior officers of war crimes before the International Court of Justice and other tribunals—as has already occurred with charges against President Calderón.¹⁰³

Despite combating cartels and drugs trafficking, President Peña Nieto has also mentioned participation in U.N. peacekeeping missions; using the military for these missions would be the first in more than sixty years. This move would be more substantiated as the constitution allows the Senate to authorize these deployments beyond the nation's borders.¹⁰⁴ This request, however, will not be the first request sent to the Senate and Congress since the Revolution.

¹⁰¹ Grayson and Army War College, *Impact of President Felipe Calderón's War*, 68.

¹⁰² Richard Fausset, "Mexico's Leader: New Vows, Old Ways," *South Florida Sun - Sentinel*, March 14, 2013, accessed November 25, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1316759970?accountid=12702>.

¹⁰³ Grayson and Army War College, *Impact of President Felipe Calderón's War*, 70.

¹⁰⁴ Jennifer Sinco Kelleher, "Mexico to take part in UN peacekeeping missions," *Associated Press*, September 25, 2014, accessed November 25, 2014, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=14&sid=9dacf38c-9cc9-47f0-95d8-31e4f064787e%40sessionmgr4005&hid=4114&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#d b=bwh&AN=APfd7809a7506d4a53bf407cb9092191e1>.

In September 2005, President Fox ordered the first deployment of Mexican troops, and a battleship, in support of Hurricane Katrina humanitarian efforts in the U.S.¹⁰⁵ Although this branching out—from exclusively a post-revolutionary domestic role—attempted to establish a path towards modernity it violated the constitution because it was deployed without prior approval. The idea to move soldiers outside of Mexico, away from their domestic roles, and into peacekeeping operations, highlighted leadership weaknesses within President Fox’s administration because this had never been proposed before. The attempted shift from solely a domestic capacity to an international role highlighted political restrictions, which hindered progress within the armed forces. A move outside of the domestic norm and into the international scene could help the military develop and modernize, but it is not guaranteed without political support. Furthermore, this would force the government to bestow more autonomy to the armed forces in order for modernization to occur, for the better good of the institution and the country as a whole.

J. SUMMARY OF THE CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONSHIP

After the 1930s, as was evident under the PRI, the civil-military relationship in Mexico was characterized by formal civilian control of the armed forces. This relationship functioned because of a civil-military pact where the armed forces offered complete loyalty to the president and civilian leaders in return for autonomy in the internal running of their operations. However, because the military was given the residual political role, it can be argued that this relationship under PRI rule was far from objective civilian control.¹⁰⁶

An important consequence of the pact between the two institutions was that civilian authority did not exert complete control on the armed forces; the procurement of military equipment and the promotions process remained in the hands of military leadership. Mexican Congress lacked complete oversight where the legislature, under the civil-military pact, restricted congressional control of the internal running of the military,

¹⁰⁵ Díez, “Legislative Oversight,” 134.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 141.

despite stipulations outlined in the Mexican Constitution. This oversight, later changed under PRI rule, culminated with its electoral defeat in 2000, allowing the emergence of Congress as a powerful political institution.¹⁰⁷

Through Jordi Díez' analysis, the armed forces' oversight remained under civilian control with the exception of allowing regular appearances of Defense Ministers to address congressional committees for questioning, and the release of information on equipment inventory and procurement. Nonetheless, his data showed that legislative oversight remained weak in a variety of areas; dealing with allegations of human rights abuses, the deployment of troops abroad, and the acquisition of weaponry. Despite not having total control, the civil-military pact never really fundamentally changed and the Mexican armed forces continued to operate with a significant degree of autonomy. Because of the lack of interest and knowledge in military matters, civilians generalized approval of the armed forces' performance and legitimized their role and mission. However, this perception and the arbitrary assignment of military roles, out of their purview, allowed them to legislate rather than oversee the functions of federal institutions. Nevertheless, members of Congress did not take any significant steps toward increasing oversight of the military, and thus legislative oversight has remained weak.¹⁰⁸

As was evident, the revolutionary narrative and structure of the armed forces changed under the various shifts in civilian control. The different transitional changes helped the military remain resilient despite the various shifts and changes in its roles and missions, and also made it a stronger force. These experiences will be paramount as it moves more towards modernity and an international presence.

¹⁰⁷ Díez, *Legislative Oversight*, 141.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

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III. CONCLUSION

A. SUMMARY

The events, rhetoric, and geopolitical representations of the Mexican Revolution still influence the contemporary narrative and ethos of the Mexican armed forces. Even though the military continues to be subordinate to civilian control and its hierarchical structure remains intact, the respect towards it as a state institution has begun to erode. The societal respect and trust that was once present is gradually being lost due to the human rights violations and the deflections of military members to organized crime. Despite these challenges, the military's loyalty and ethos continues to remain status quo.

Even though the Revolution continues to have some influence, there have been some changes to the armed forces. First, the Mexican military is now a tool of the government and not of one particular party. Second, there has been a change in the public's view and trust of the military due to the human rights and abuse of power issues. Third, the military has lost some autonomy with respect to how it handles its internal discipline and military crimes—as these actions are now being turned over to the civilian sector for prosecution. And finally, President Peña Nieto is now contemplating the expansion of the military's role in the United Nations and internationally, signaling a significant change from its domestic role since the Revolution.

B. THE EFFECTS OF DEMOCRACY

For the first time since the 71-year, PRI-controlled presidency, democracy tested the loyalty between the military and the state. When President Miguel Aleman took office in 1946, as the first civilian head of state since the Revolution, a “non-written civil-military pact” was established between civilian leadership of the PRI and the Mexican military. This pact set the conditions for the president to recognize and respect the military institution, and for the armed forces to reciprocate equal respect to civilian leadership. However, the armed forces were forced to follow a set of rules, institutional norms, and doctrine that were established after President Calles' tenure. This direction

combined with the military's institutional loyalty to the PRI, caused friction in the democratization process.¹⁰⁹ Today, the armed forces maintain that democratic loyalty and support, but with some reservations due to the assigned roles and missions that are outside of the confines of the constitution.

Since the Revolution, the Mexican military's mission has been focused mainly on internal and domestic affairs. In the early twentieth century, it was established as a force to execute light infantry and guerrilla warfare operations across the country. This military presence and role throughout the country allowed the government to deter insurgencies, and also gave them reassurance and trust. As was evident during the PRI era and now in the twenty-first century, the armed forces assumed additional responsibilities, which were social in nature and unjustly outside of their scope. As Guevaro Moyano noted, "the Army [implemented] disaster relief operations as part of its mission portfolio, and participated in national vaccination, literacy, nutrition, and reforestation campaigns, which [also] created a strong bond between the civilian population and the military."¹¹⁰ Though these domestic and social roles, still reminiscent of the Revolution, justified the military's status and mission in the public eye, it negated its stature as a modernizing force in the international realm.

Nevertheless, this military role has been dramatically transformed in the last decade. The rise in drug trafficking and organized crime redirected the military to combating these security threats caused by transnational criminal organizations and gangs.¹¹¹ "Despite the enormous amounts of money and forces directed to this effort, the uncommon and disproportionate war between a clandestine and invincible enemy supported by international networks and funds, and a traditional and limited army, has frequently dragged many of its members into corruption and treachery. Each year it is

¹⁰⁹ José Francisco Gallardo, *Always Near, Always Far: The Armed Forces in Mexico* (Mexico, DF: Global Exchange and Centro de Investigaciones Económicas y Políticas de Acción Comunitaria, 2000), xix–xx.

¹¹⁰ Moyano, *Adapting, Transforming, and Modernizing under Fire: The Mexican Military 2006–11*, 7–8.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

known that several army officials and soldiers have accepted bribes from drug gangs.”¹¹² The transformation of the military’s role and mission under the PRI signaled the transition from the tool of the PRI to a stronger and more direct legislative oversight under the PAN. With the election of President Fox, democratic legitimacy was acknowledged through the first internationally recognized “clean and fair election in contemporary Mexico.”¹¹³ His inauguration on December 1, 2000, confirmed Mexico’s transition away from authoritarianism to the country’s first democratic government in nearly a century.¹¹⁴ This transformation, however, created challenges with control between the state and the military, and sustaining the relationship in the future.

C. MEXICAN MILITARY OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

1. Military Transition from One-Party to Government Control

A byproduct of the Revolution was the civil-military cooperation and revolutionary ideals that formed under the establishment of the one-party state in Mexico.¹¹⁵ Even though this one-party state functioned under the tenure of the PRI, it soon changed with the arrival of the PAN in 2000 and again with the PRI in 2012. The takeaway from the transition was that the weaknesses, under the one-party rule after the Revolution, required more centralized government control that was purposely overlooked under the PRI.

Though the PAN attempted to reorganize the military under a more centralized government in 2000, its future role and mission remained unclear even after 2012. While campaigning for president in 2012, Enrique Peña Nieto supported keeping the presence of soldiers and marines in high crime states and areas to resume the security role established by his predecessors Presidents Fox and Calderón. While his move was to

¹¹² Laura Randall, *Changing Structure of Mexico: Political, Social, and Economic Prospects* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2006), 378, accessed January 15, 2015, <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/nps/reader.action?docID=10178111>.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹¹⁴ Randall, *Changing Structure of Mexico*, 55.

¹¹⁵ Díez, “Legislative Oversight,” 120.

organize the military, it contradicted his original stance to return soldiers to the barracks.¹¹⁶

His rationale then was to keep the armed forces in charge, in the absence of an established civilian law and resource, which lacked sufficient training, professionalism, and equipment required to carry out this important mission.¹¹⁷ Additionally, he stated that the control of the military was to be the task of the Mexican state, and that the actions of the armed forces should be carried out only on the orders of the government and not as an exclusive task of individual political parties.¹¹⁸ Although this revolutionary rhetoric kept the armed forces subordinate to the PRI until 2000, the last three presidents have since supported controlling the armed forces entirely as the tool of the government. This mentality established a new Mexican civil-military relationship where the military became subordinate to a stronger legislative oversight, which prompted a shift from the revolutionary one-party rhetoric. This shift would act as the required vehicle to ensure accountability and prevent further shielding of the armed forces from the law.

Under the one-party rule, Congress did not have complete oversight of the armed forces, which allowed it to operate with autonomy. This autonomy contributed to corruption where the PRI allowed retired military generals and admirals to fill congressional seats.¹¹⁹ This revolutionary narrative contributed to corruption and further weakened an already brittle relationship between the two institutions. Ultimately, these political institutions were weakened because of the president's high centralization of power—through corporatism and the exercise of unwritten and assumed powers.¹²⁰ Subsequently, the need to strengthen the control of the military in the twenty-first century, as a tool of the government and not of a one-party hierarchical structure, became the central goal in contemporary Mexico.

¹¹⁶ "Mexico's Peña Nieto Discusses Armed Forces' Crime-Fighting Role," *EFE News Service*, Apr 09, 2012, accessed December 23, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/992856920?accountid=12702>.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Díez, "Legislative Oversight," 123

¹²⁰ Ibid., 122.

2. Changes to the Modern Military's Leadership and Structure

In the last decade, the Mexican armed forces have been in unfamiliar territory as its political intentions, structure, loyalty to civilian rule, and its role in the war against organized crime have questioned its narrative. The change in political control in the twenty-first century also created a drastic effect on public security. This political transition “disrupted a once stable and predictable system of official corruption” where the relationship between organized crime and the PRI—a loose but mutually desirable union—was dissolved definitively as the PAN assumed the presidency and won many governor seats in 2000.¹²¹ The PAN brought with it a shift from the revolutionary narrative of controlling the military unilaterally, to a more centralized and bureaucratic hierarchy, where the government collectively could dictate its roles and missions. Unlike the PRI, the PAN wanted to create a vehicle whereas, regardless of the political party in office at the time, the control of the military would be a governmental responsibility.¹²²

The structure of Mexico's armed forces continues to be complex and different from other militaries in the Western Hemisphere. President Lázaro Cárdenas introduced a structural change that was supposed to reduce the military's power and expand its range of skills. Dividing the Mexican Armed Forces into two autonomous departments—SEDENA and SEMAR—and leaving the Mexican Air Force subordinate to its army counterpart, became the Mexican military's structure after the Revolution.¹²³ President Cárdenas' action did remove military influence and power from politics, but at the same time gave it undue autonomy; autonomy that the elite feared would later interfere with their control and governance. The structure nonetheless did not provide the tools necessary for the military to be autonomous.

Today the government continues to lack the state resources and an established checks-and-balances system to both combat crime and also deal with the human rights abuses, which have sequestered the public eye in recent years. As the role of the armed

¹²¹ Aaron W. Navarro, “The Nature of Mexican Politics,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 2 (2013): 540, accessed December 24, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/msem.2013.29.2.522>.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 535–36.

¹²³ Camp, *Generals in the Palacio*, 23.

forces expanded to combating drug trafficking, these human rights violations increased, leaving the state without the tools to address them. Although non-government organizations had the ability to investigate these cases, they did not have the strength nor the tools to have a sustained effect on shaping public policy.¹²⁴ This deficiency undermined the power of the state, which then affected the public's trust in the militarization of security.

Another facet of the military structure that was soon to change was the establishment of the Gendarmerie. Even though this was intended to solve the unjustified utilization of the military, as was mentioned in Chapter II, it does not seem to be the case today as President Peña Nieto has pulled back on making it operational. The Gendarmerie was supposed to lessen the role of the military against cartels, but it never gained support from the beginning. It was supposed to be a separate civilian-military hybrid force—with a military construct, but under civilian control—of over 40,000 members initially to now, a potential force of 5,000, subordinate to the Federal Police. Without clear operational goals and the political support needed for it to become a successful organization, it is difficult to see if it will ever come to the aid of the military.¹²⁵

D. THE MEXICAN MILITARY AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

As mentioned previously, the Mexican armed forces' role, mission, and structure has changed since the Revolution and more importantly, in the last fourteen years. While the military's role and mission remained status quo during these past years, President Calderón's shift to counter-narcotics in 2006 changed the way the armed forces were utilized and provided institutional leverage. Although the military has been actively engaged against the drug cartels, it has had its share of negative experiences, which have undermined its work and progress since 2000. The most prominent is the human rights abuses which continue to occur under the present counter-narcotics campaign. These abuses affect the military's credibility in the public eye and also signal a weakening in

¹²⁴ Navarro, "Nature of Mexican Politics," 535-536.

¹²⁵ Patrick Corcoran, "Mexico Security under Enrique Peña Nieto, 1 Year Review," *Insight Crime.Org*, December 1, 2013, accessed January 9, 2015, <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/mexico-security-under-enrique-pena-nieto-one-year-in>.

civilian control. President Calderón's policy—toward the drug trafficking organizations—came with a rather steep price tag, giving the military renewed political standing.¹²⁶ With this political opportunity came also a level of autonomy that left the government with the dilemma of trying to take some of it back and keeping the armed forces happy at the same time.

Some of SEDENA's contemporary challenges of the past few years involve, predominantly, human rights violations and the attempted cover-ups. These violations are concentrated on the Mexican army, but the lack of accountability and action from the military justice system as a whole, has tarnished the entire Mexican armed forces. The violations, "resulting from corruption and the absence of law and order are the central issues in Mexico today."¹²⁷ Despite carrying out the roles and missions established by the government, the Mexican army's track record and SEDENA's laissez-faire approach demonstrate that the sheltering of the military, which was acceptable under PRI rule, continues to be indicative of the revolutionary narrative.

Aside from the civilian control aspect and autonomy, holding the armed forces accountable for its actions is a major change in the management of the military, since the Revolution; more specifically, the human rights violations and abuse of power allegations the military has been accused of in the last few years. The military, which has led anti-drug efforts in the past, has been stained by allegations that soldiers continually abuse their power, which have led to integrity and trust issues. In June 2014, it was reported that the army had killed suspects who had already surrendered. Although there were different versions of the actions, the army acted unlawfully, but Federal Attorney General Jesus Murillo Karam turned an eye and did not investigate these complaints until three months later.¹²⁸ Since being in office, President Peña Nieto has dealt with the abuse of

¹²⁶ Navarro, "Nature of Mexican Politics," 532.

¹²⁷ "The Obama/Peña Nieto Reunion," *La Opinion*, January 9, 2015, accessed January 9, 2015, <http://www.laopinion.com/opinioneditorial/article/20150106/The-ObamaPena-Nieto-Reunion>.

¹²⁸ Katherine Corcoran, "Analysis: Mexico Scandals expose government without answers," *Associated Press*, January 5, 2015, accessed January 13, 2015, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/ea1b4e6a786547eda129ba1151582623/analysis-mexico-scandals-expose-government-without-answers>.

power and human rights violations within the armed forces, most recently with the case in Tlatlaya, Mexico City.¹²⁹

In the Tlatlaya incident, army personnel killed twenty-two people; twelve of them execution-style, inside of an empty warehouse in Mexico City. The military denied its involvement, but through various witness accounts and a report by the National Human Rights Commission, Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos (CNDH), the government demanded action.¹³⁰ Three months after the incident, the CNDH prompted the military justice system to act swiftly and hold the military accountable for these actions. Although the government was slow in reacting, it detained twenty-four soldiers and one lieutenant allegedly for participating in the incident, accusing eight of them with a breach of military discipline and charging them with an undue and unjust exercise of public service; three of which, were also charged with abuse of authority, aggravated homicide, and crime scene altering. In addition, the officer was charged with trying to cover-up the killings.¹³¹ Due to recent Mexican Supreme Court rulings, as result of legal interpretations of the law, the Tlatlaya case was turned over to civilian prosecutors.¹³²

Erubiel Tirado says that: “the government strategy of the last two years has been just like that, sacrificing some troops and an intermediate officer in order to shelter themselves behind the tale of disobedience and a lack of military protocol application.”¹³³ This incident became an important event for President Peña Nieto; his oversight demonstrated the commitment to a human rights policy distinct from that of his predecessor President Calderón, where he was forced to take the appropriate measure to hold the army accountable for the massacre.¹³⁴ This along with the political pressure he

¹²⁹ *Mexico's Voices: The Limits of Civilian Control*, accessed January 9, 2015, <http://mexicovoices.blogspot.com/2014/10/mexicos-army-limits-of-civilian-control.html>.

¹³⁰ “Mexico: Delays, Cover-Up Mar Atrocities Response,” *Human Rights Watch*, November 7, 2014, accessed December 23, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/11/07/mexico-delays-cover-mar-atrocities-response>.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Tracy Wilkinson, “A Major Test for Pena Nieto; Mexico’s Inquiry on a Mass Killing by the Army Will Reflect on His Rights Pledge,” *Los Angeles Times*, Sep 27, 2014, accessed December 23, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1565624382?accountid=12702>.

¹³³ *Mexico's Voices: The Limits of Civilian Control*.

¹³⁴ Wilkinson, “A Major Test for Pena Nieto.”

was under, required him to demand action and take a more decisive role despite what he wanted. In dealing with the incident, he and the government showed great initiative and accountability, which helped sustain society's positive view of the military.

In light of other challenges within SEDENA, the loss of autonomy, in terms of handling its military internal discipline, was the most crucial. The Tlatlaya case forced the government to move away from the military judiciary system and utilize civilian courts in prosecuting military crimes.¹³⁵ Until the last few years, the constitution had provided the military with a type of jurisdiction—disciplinary actions independent from political affairs—that could not, “under any circumstances (except for the emergency situations described by the Constitution itself in Article 29), be extended to ordinary citizens. Any crime or misdemeanor committed by military members [was] subject to be treated by military courts and not by ordinary courts.”¹³⁶

Since President Calderón tasked the military to fight drug organizations in 2006, “soldiers have been accused of illegal detentions, torture and killing civilians at checkpoints, among other abuses, as they carried out policing actions and operations against the gangs across the country.”¹³⁷ Between 2007 and 2012, the Mexican armed forces “opened nearly 5,000 investigations into criminal wrongdoing by soldiers against civilians . . . but only 38 ended in sentencing, according to Human Rights Watch.”¹³⁸ The military's inadequate handling of these issues prompted human rights groups to petition reform to end the military's jurisdiction for cases involving crimes against civilians, since military trials failed to prosecute these crimes under the federal justice system.¹³⁹ Another contributing factor to the problem or to the lack of action, within the military justice system is the power of SEDENA. SEDENA retains both executive and judicial

¹³⁵ Michael O'Boyle and Ken Wills, “Mexico votes to allow civilian trials for soldiers,” *Reuters*, April 24, 2014, accessed January 14, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/01/us-mexico-military-idUSBREA4002520140501>.

¹³⁶ Randall, *Changing Structure of Mexico*, 378.

¹³⁷ O'Boyle and Wills, “Mexico votes.”

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

power over the military, which undermines the role of military judges, and ultimately contributes to the lack of accountability and integrity.¹⁴⁰

E. MILITARY'S CONTEMPORARY LOYALTY AND ETHOS

Regardless of the challenges the armed forces experiences, its loyalty and ethos will continue to be important qualities for new generations to come. Laura Randall says, “The Mexican armed forces have remained silent and loyal actors in turbulent times of transformation, despite the fact that some changes have altered their own stability.”¹⁴¹ Despite the turbulent times within the armed forces, it is surprising to see that there have not been any explicit clashes with the state. As odd as it might seem, some of the post-revolutionary ideas and structure prevent this type of behavior. Among those is the military's contemporary professional military education (PME) and training. According to SEDENA:

a physical, mental, and cultural transformation of men and women, to convince and commit them to voluntarily surrender their loyalty, skills, abilities, intelligence, and life itself to the country and its institutions, if necessary, to meet the duties imposed by the armed services.¹⁴²

Subsequently, the military continues to remain loyal to civilian rule. Friedrich Katz says that the Mexican Army has a “clearly observable anti-militarist tradition.”¹⁴³

Because of this professionalism, which was established during and since the Revolution by the PRI, the military still retains a great level of loyalty towards the government. This loyalty and ethos present within the Mexican armed forces still allows the government to maintain total control, and dictate the role and missions it requires, whether or not it remains within the confines of the constitution. Prior to 2000, the Mexican armed forces had a relatively free hand in terms of budget allocations, internal

¹⁴⁰ “Mexico: Hold Military to Account on Rights Abuses,” *Huntington Post*, updated May, 25, 2011, accessed January 14, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/human-rights-watch/mexico-hold-military-to-a_b_193615.html.

¹⁴¹ Randall, *Changing Structure of Mexico*, 377.

¹⁴² Secretaria de la Defensa Nacional, “Educación Militar,” SEDENA, accessed January 9, 2015, <http://www.sedena.gob.mx/index.php/educacion-militar>.

¹⁴³ José Francisco Gallardo, *Always Near, Always Far: The Armed Forces in Mexico* (Mexico D.F.: Global Exchange and Centro de Investigaciones Económicas y Políticas de Acción Comunitaria, 2000), xv.

promotions and assessment, and the day-to-day management of military policy. In 2015, the relationship seems to remain consistent where civilians exact political loyalty from the military, while denying its members the opportunity to get involved with politics—mainly in competing for political office. As this civil-military relationship continues to develop, the real test will be to see if these policies will remain intact. However, the increased military demands in counternarcotic operations provide a new source of leverage, where generals seek to request larger budgets with little civilian oversight.¹⁴⁴ As military leaders continue to hold on to this leverage, it will be interesting to see when they decide to utilize it and the effects it will have on the relationship.

F. CHANGE IN FUTURE MISSION: MOVE FROM THE REVOLUTIONARY STRUCTURE?

Besides the challenges within the institution, the military seems to be on a path towards structural change and modernity; updating the country's National Defense Plan and making it more joint is the first step. Upon assuming the presidency in 2006, President Calderón tasked SEDENA to create a Sectorial National Defense Plan for the country. His intent was to establish an apparatus to plan and conduct military activities in accordance with the priorities and objectives identified in the National Development Plan. This plan, similar to the U.S. National Security Strategy, was an attempt at providing a sense of transparency to the military's new role in combating internal criminal organizations.¹⁴⁵ Even though the iteration establishes the domestic roles that were outlined in the previous chapter, it failed to include anything in reference to international involvement, which will be discussed later.

1. Change in Structure

Despite the fact that the military's structural configuration and hierarchy has not been ideal, in terms of modernity and jointness, it is still present today and continues to be influenced by its revolutionary rhetoric. Although not an ideal structure, each branch

¹⁴⁴ Navarro, "Nature of Mexican Politics," 532.

¹⁴⁵ Secretaria de la Defensa Nacional, "Misión," SEDENA, accessed December 31, 2014, <http://www.sedena.gob.mx/index.php/educacion-militar>.

continues to have its own autonomy and no relationship or togetherness exists between the services. In 2013, President Peña Nieto pushed another military initiative, this time ordering both defense secretariats to develop a Joint National Defense Policy. This move was in response to the rivalry that exists and the unwillingness of the two military institutions to work together towards joint operations. Working together would allow the individual services to work and address their internal security challenges more efficiently using each other's strengths and lessons learned. This push would improve the structure and hierarchy in the military whereas it could mirror the U.S.'s structure. A move towards establishing a General Staff or Joint Chief of Staff in Mexico would help organize the armed forces under a more efficient configuration. Nevertheless, until this happens, both ministries continue to maintain a very linear structure with extreme loyalty to their civilian leadership. Inigo Guevara Moyano explained that: "this policy should lead to a redefinition of the Mexican Defense system and its linkages with other sectors of the federal government."¹⁴⁶

2. United Nations Involvement

Another significant change to the revolutionary rhetoric and the armed forces—under President Peña Nieto's control—is expanding Mexican military operations through deployments outside of Mexico. Since the Revolution, and more specifically after WWII, the military has been restricted to domestic security and combating drug cartels, which could change very soon. In September 2014, President Peña Nieto announced that his government was planning to have the Mexican armed forces participate in future United Nations humanitarian and peacekeeping missions.¹⁴⁷ His intent is to gradually increase Mexico's involvement and presence in these types of missions internationally. With President Peña Nieto's intent to participate in these U.N. peace missions, it will be interesting to see whether or not the military is prepared to fulfill this function

¹⁴⁶ Inigo Guevara Moyano, "Comando Y Control: Político De Defensa Y Planeación Militar," México Seguridad, accessed December 31, 2014, <http://www.mexicoseguridad.mx/site/?p=26>.

¹⁴⁷ "Mexico's Plan to Send Military to UN Peacekeeping Missions Likely to Weaken its Fight Against Drug Cartels," *Jane's Intelligence Weekly*, Sep 24, 2014, accessed December 30, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1565625311?accountid=12702>.

democratically, with due transparency similar to other countries without transforming its own institution.¹⁴⁸

In summary, the Mexican armed forces are still influenced by a revolutionary narrative, which continues to help it develop into a stronger military in the twenty-first century. From its inception after the Revolution in 1920 and through 2000, the military experienced a transition from a one-party apparatus—in charge of protecting the PRI and handling domestic affairs—to exclusive utilization under legislative rule. This experience provided autonomy, which contributed to the change in structure and reach in 2015, and also to us these experiences for further development and modernization.

Though it has been difficult since 1920 to look beyond the assigned and unjustified roles and missions, under objective and subjective civilian control, the Mexican military's loyalty has helped keep it grounded. This is important especially with the false promises and talks of the last three years about returning it back to the barracks and replacing its counternarcotics mission with the Gendarmerie. With all of the turmoil it has endured in the last eighty-six years, the armed forces look to finally validate its role of protector of the republic with its pending shift, from solely a domestic role, to international significance with the upcoming the U.N. opportunity.¹⁴⁹ When and if Congress approves this constitutional change, the Mexican military has the potential to also obtain an international role and presence.

¹⁴⁸ *Mexico's Voices: The Limits of Civilian Control*.

¹⁴⁹ See Wager and Army War College (U.S.), *Mexican Military Approaches the 21st Century*, 11.

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